

Missouri State Parks 21 for '21 Challenge

Long before statehood, Missouri's natural resources formed into livable, sustainable landscapes for animals and humans. These landscapes would eventually become the main features for many of our Missouri State Parks. Explore unique natural wonders, learn about native peoples, and experience Missouri as people 200 years ago would have. Listed here are 21 parks and sites to explore in 2021.



The Missouri State Parks 21 for '21 Challenge is sponsored by Missouri State Parks, a division of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Missouri State Parks preserves and interprets the state's most outstanding natural landscapes and cultural landmarks, and provides outstanding recreational opportunities compatible with those resources. The state park system includes 91 state parks and historic sites plus the trails at Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry. The system includes sites that preserve the archaeological record of indigenous people that lived in the region long before Missouri became a state; homes of famous Missourians and Civil War battlefields; and reminders of yesterday such as gristmills and covered bridges. The state's most outstanding landscapes are also preserved for everyone's enjoyment – deep forests, glades, prairies and blue streams and lakes. There is something for everyone at Missouri State Parks!



Missouri State Parks 21 for '21 Challenge ... Visit at least 5 sites. Remember: Missouri Explorers must be registered in the program, and they are responsible for checking hours and availability of sites. Upload your verification photographs using the online submission form at <https://missouri2021.org/missouri-explorers/> to receive your merit badge button.

Remember, Missouri Explorers, you are responsible for checking hours and availability of sites before arriving.

Adair County

Thousand Hills State Park

20431 State Highway 157
Kirksville Missouri
660-665-6995

The cool waters of Forest Lake provide the centerpiece for Thousand Hills State Park, whose woody shores and broad savannas recall a time when northern Missouri was far less developed. Archaeologists believe the area was once part of an ancient ceremonial ground used by the Native Americans that inhabited Missouri as many as 1,500 years ago. Ancient rock carvings of images such as crosses, arrows, snakes, thunderbirds and other animals, which were made by chipping and rubbing into the sandstone rock, can be found at the petroglyph site. Visit the interpretive petroglyph shelter and count the number of petroglyphs that you can

see. Snap your photograph in front of the petroglyph shelter.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/thousand-hills-state-park>

Barton County

Prairie State Park

128 NW 150th Lane
Mindenmines, Missouri
417-843-6711

Tallgrass prairies once covered more than a third of Missouri; today, less than 1% remains, much of it preserved at Prairie State Park. Visitors to the park see panoramic vistas of swaying grass and ever-changing wildflowers. They also may spot the park's resident bison herd. Explore Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center to view exhibits that interpret the tallgrass prairie, such as a diorama depicting

the prairie from spring to fall, a bison exhibit and interactive activities. Snap your photograph in front of the nature center's bison exhibit.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/prairie-state-park>

Buchanan County

Lewis and Clark State Park

801 Lake Crest Boulevard
Rushville, Missouri
816-579-5564

The Lewis and Clark Expedition headed west in 1804 and encountered a lake that William Clark described as "full of Geese & Goslings." Today, that lake is Lewis and Clark Lake, which is bordered by Lewis and Clark State Park. As part of the commemoration of Lewis and Clark's historic journey that began in 1803, a Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Plaza was incorporated into the landscape of the park in 2006. The plaza includes a screened and bermed walk that leads visitors to an interpretive area featuring a compass rose, stone benches with the names of all expedition members, a scenic overlook and interpretive materials arranged along the walk. Snap your photograph of the compass rose featured in the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Plaza.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/lewis-and-clark-state-park>

Clark County

Battle of Athens State Historic Site

12378 Athens State Park Road
Revere, Missouri
660-877-3871

Battle of Athens State Historic Site is one of our northern most parks along the banks of the Des Moines River and the state of Iowa's border. Archaeological research conducted at the site has uncovered evidence that a Native American occupation of the area long preceded the historic town site and included an early 19th century Sauk and Fox village. Its tree-studded landscape and mile of Des Moines River frontage make the site a perfect place to hike,

picnic or camp. The facility also contains the Des Moines River Ravines Natural Area, home of numerous rare ferns, wildflowers and other plants. Hike the 0.3-mile Mill Trail, which gives a close-up view of the Des Moines River and the foundations of a mid-19th century grist and textile mill. During the months of October through March, bald eagles may be viewed along the river section, where both mature and fledgling eagles feed. Inclines, rocks and low-lying ground may make this trail slippery and muddy during inclement weather. Snap your photograph overlooking the Des Moines River.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/battle-athens-state-historic-site>

Iliniwek Village State Historic Site

Highway 27
Wayland, Missouri
660-877-3871

High above the Des Moines River's floodplain, the grasses that sway back and forth in the wind beckon visitors to Iliniwek Village State Historic Site. The site is the only Illinois Indian village site found in Missouri and is thought to have been occupied from about 1640 through the late 1670s. Walk along Oxbow Trail where you will find the remains of a long house typical of the style the Illinois Tribe used at the time of the Marquette and Joliet Expedition. Snap your photograph in front of the excavated long house, marked vertical by wooden poles.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/iliniwek-village-state-historic-site>

Cole County

Clark's Hill/Norton State Historic Site

Osage Hickory Street
Osage City, Missouri
573-449-7402

Walk in the footsteps of the Lewis and Clark Expedition at Clark's Hill/Norton State Historic Site. The expedition camped at the base of Clark's Hill between June 1 and June 3, 1804, on their epic journey. William Clark climbed the hill on June 2 and saw a sweeping vista that

included the confluence of the Missouri and Osage rivers. Today, a short trail takes visitors past two American Indian mounds mentioned by Clark in his journals and to an overlook that shows where Clark stood more than 200 years ago. Hike up Osage Trail and follow in the footsteps of William Clark, who ascended the hill to make observations in his journal about the Missouri and Osage rivers. Today, visitors can journey through the wooded area to the top of Clark's Hill and see the rock where he stood and viewed both rivers. On the way up the hill, visitors will pass two Indian mounds that Clark wrote about in his journal. Although only half a mile long, there are sections of the trail that are very steep. There are two benches along the trail and one at the overlook to provide a place to rest. Snap your photograph at the trailhead kiosk at the bottom of Osage Trail.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/clarks-hillnorton-state-historic-site>

Missouri State Museum

201 W. Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, Missouri
573-751-4127

The Missouri State Museum is where visitors go to immerse themselves in the history of the Show-Me State. The museum, located in the State Capitol, houses an impressive collection of exhibits portraying the state's natural and cultural history, from pre-history to modern times. In commemoration of the Bicentennial, the museum is exhibiting its "Missouri Bicentennial Timeline," where visitors can follow a river of time that flows through thousands of years of Missouri history. Illustrated by St. Louis artist Dan Zettwoch and stretching 80 feet, the timeline highlights the triumphs and tragedies of Missouri history. Missouri's state symbols and fun references to Missouri's culture and folklore are scattered along the timeline. Visit to see what you find hidden in the illustrations. Snap your photograph with one of the state symbols that you found in the Missouri Bicentennial Timeline exhibit.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/missouri-state-museum>

Dent County

Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry

11053 CR 19D
Salem, Missouri
573-858-3015

Solitude reigns in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry, a 60,000-acre tract adjacent to Echo Bluff State Park. The backcountry is part of Pioneer Forest, which is owned by the L-A-D Foundation. Plan for a day hike or an extended hike along the 15-mile Brushy Creek Trail, which begins across the county road from the trailhead. The trail crosses the ridge and leads down into Brushy Creek Hollow, following the bed of a logging tram through native shortleaf pine. After a little more than a mile, hikers continue down the valley passing the abandoned company town of Brushy where remnants are still visible. The trail follows the valley toward the Current River. Near the river, hikers may return along the shorter 3.6-mile interior white connector route climbing out of Middle Prong valley to its long ridge. Snap your photograph of the trailhead sign for Brushy Creek Trail.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/trails-roger-pryor-pioneer-backcountry>

Dunklin County

Morris State Park

Highway WW
Campbell, Missouri
573-297-3232

Explore a geologic oddity – Crowley's Ridge – at Morris State Park. The ridge rises 200 feet above the Mississippi River's floodplain and consists of a strip of low hills ranging from a half-mile to 5 or more miles wide. Beech Tree Trail showcases many of the unique aspects of Crowley's Ridge in southeast Missouri. The trail begins on the top of the ridge and descends into bottomlands before returning to the ridge top, passing through different natural communities along the way. The first .1 mile of the trail is considered accessible. The final section of the trail along the orchard is private property so

hikers are asked to be respectful of property owners. Mosquitoes are common and can be abundant during the late spring, summer and early fall. Snap your photograph from the overlook pavilion on Beech Tree Trail.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/morris-state-park>

Grundy County

Crowder State Park

76 NW Highway 128
Trenton, Missouri
660-359-6473

Nestled in the rolling, glaciated hills of north-central Missouri, Crowder State Park is special for several reasons. The park offers a retreat of rugged slopes and stately forests in a region otherwise consisting of generally level farmland. Additionally, the Thompson River winds its way through the park. Several mounds of prehistoric American Indian origin are found in the park, and at the time the first American settlers showed up, the area was still being used by Sac and Fox tribes. Relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery surrounding the 18-acre Crowder Lake. Consider renting one of the park's canoes or kayaks for a leisurely exploration of the lake. Snap your photograph with Crowder Lake in the background.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/crowder-state-park>

Howard County

Boone's Lick State Historic Site

Highway 87
Franklin, Missouri
660-837-3330

After a short hike, visitors to Boone's Lick State Historic Site can see the remnants of one of Missouri's first and most important industries: salt. Timber and rolling green hills drew settlers to Cooper, Howard and Saline counties, but it was salt that made the area grow. In 1804, explorers Lewis and Clark reported the presence of many saltwater springs in the area and, by 1810, the area had acquired the name "Boone's

Lick Country." The largest of the salt springs was the Boone's Lick. As you hike the quiet Boone's Lick Interpretive Trail, try to imagine the busy industry that occurred at the saltworks, with two furnaces and up to 40 men laboring over as many as 60 boiling kettles of salt water. Mosquitoes can be abundant along the trail, so insect repellent is recommended. Snap your photograph next to the iron salt kettle that remains as a reminder of the extensive saltworks once located here.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/boones-lick-state-historic-site>

Iron County

Taum Sauk Mountain State Park

148 Taum Sauk Trail,
Middlebrook, Missouri
573-546-2450

Climb to the top of Taum Sauk Mountain State Park and be on top of Missouri – literally. The park's 7,500 acres include the highest point in the state. Located in the St. Francois the park's wooded areas and rocky glades provide a beautiful, solitary experience for hikers. Mina Sauk Falls Trail provides access to two of Missouri's most important geologic wonders - its highest point and its tallest waterfall. From the parking area, a short walk along a wheelchair-accessible trail leads to the top of Taum Sauk Mountain and the highest point in the state at 1,772 feet above sea level. Beyond this point, the trail becomes rocky and rugged and is not considered accessible to wheelchairs. From here on, the trail is strenuous and challenging so be prepared for the rugged, rocky climb and carry plenty of water. Hikers may encounter water crossings in wet weather. Snap your photograph at the high point of Taum Sauk Mountain.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/taum-sauk-mountain-state-park>

Linn County

Pershing State Park

29277 Highway 130
Laclede, Missouri

660-963-2299

Wander through a slice of pre-settlement landscape at Pershing State Park. The park is an excellent example of the wetland landscape once common in northern Missouri. Virtually all north Missouri rivers and streams have now been straightened and channelized; their flood plains converted to crop and pasture land. However, a portion of Locust Creek still meanders across the floodplain within the park and keeps alive the rare example of what these lands once held. The best way to explore the wetlands and view wildlife is on the park's Boardwalk Trail. The exhibits along the boardwalk explain the forces that interact with one another to create and maintain the wetlands and wildlife found in the park. The boardwalk leads visitors through bottomland forest, shrub swamps, marsh and wet prairie. An observation tower overlooks the largest remaining wet prairie in north Missouri at nearly 1,000 acres. Snap your photograph from the overlook tower.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/pershing-state-park>

McDonald County

Big Sugar Creek State Park

Big Sugar Creek Road
Pineville, Missouri
417-847-2539

Hike a trail back into history at Big Sugar Creek State Park. At the time that the southwest Missouri area was settled, upland prairies, forested river hills and savannas dominated the landscape. "A tall, thick and rank growth of wild grass covers the whole country, in which the oaks are standing interspersed, like fruit trees in some well-cultivated orchard, and giving to the scenery the most novel, pleasing and picturesque appearance." This excerpt from a journal written in the 1800s by early traveler and explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft describes the type of landscape called savanna that once covered 13 million acres of Missouri, including part of the area that now encompasses Big Sugar Creek State Park. Today, this landscape is nearly extinct. As you hike along the Ozark

Chinquapin Trail, look for the low prickly pear cactus that grows in the glades found in the park. Ticks can be abundant so insect repellent is recommended. Snap your photograph at the Ozark Chinquapin Trailhead sign.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/big-sugar-creek-state-park>

Mississippi County

Big Oak Tree State Park

13640 South Hwy 102
East Prairie, Missouri
573-649-3149

Early explorers to the "Bootheel" region of southeast Missouri discovered a unique landscape where the Ozark hills dropped off abruptly into flat flood plains covered with giant trees. The forest trees that took root here grew to enormous proportions in the fertile earth. Today, nature-seekers to "swampeast" Missouri will find a forested island, known as Big Oak Tree State Park, in the midst of a vast agricultural area. The park features the state park system's only cypress swamp. Hike the Boardwalk Trail and see how many state champion trees you can find. Mosquitoes and other insects are abundant in the area, so insect repellent is recommended. Snap your photograph in front of one of the state champion trees identified along the Boardwalk Trail.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/big-oak-tree-state-park>

Towosahgy State Historic Site

CR 502
East Prairie, Missouri
573-748-5340

Towosahgy State Historic Site is a former fortified village and civic-ceremonial center for the Mississippian peoples who lived in southern Missouri between A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1400. Visitors to the site can see mounds that speak to the site's past activities and exhibit panels that tell the story of Towosahgy through archaeological excavations. Follow a short interpretive trail to the mounds and other areas

of the village where you can imagine this once-thriving culture found in this area hundreds of years ago. Snap your photograph of the interpretive kiosk that provides interpretive information about the village and its inhabitants.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/towosahgy-state-historic-site>

Montgomery County

Graham Cave State Park

217 Highway TT
Danville, Missouri
573-564-3476

A walk in Graham Cave State Park is a walk through ancient history. Artifacts uncovered in Graham Cave reveal that people occupied the cave 8,000 to 10,000 years ago. To walk through the park's 386 scenic acres, which includes the diverse Graham Cave Glades Natural Area, is to walk in the footsteps of the hunter-gatherers who lived in the area's caves during the ancient Dalton and Archaic period. Hike the Graham Cave Trail starting at an interpretive shelter with wayside exhibits and an overlook at a wet-weather waterfall. Follow the trail to the mouth of Graham Cave. Snap your photograph at any one of the interpretive panels.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/graham-cave-state-park>

Oregon County

Grand Gulf State Park

Highway W
Thayer, Missouri
417-264-7600

Some people call Grand Gulf State Park the "Little Grand Canyon." Some just call it "breathtaking." The park is one of the natural wonders of the Ozarks, presenting the most spectacular collapsed cave system in the Ozarks. Take a hike on the Interpretive Loop Trail to experience some of the most spectacular views of the gulf as well as the remains of the collapsed cave system and the remaining cave

located in the Grand Gulf sink. The surface of the trail is crushed rock with steps and steep slopes. Visitors should wear a good pair of shoes or hiking boots. While on the Interpretive Loop Trail, snap your photograph from one of the four overlooks that allow visitors to view the sights of Grand Gulf.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/grand-gulf-state-park>

Saint Francois County

Missouri Mines State Historic Site \$

4000 State Highway 32
Jefferson City, Missouri
573-431-6226

Lead has been big business in the eastern Ozarks since about 1720. Come explore its history – and see the processing plant of the former St. Joe Lead Company – in the heart of the Old Lead Belt at Missouri Mines State Historic Site. The mine's former powerhouse has been turned into a museum that interprets the area's lead mining history, displays actual machinery from the mines and houses one of the Midwest's finest mineral collections. The Missouri Mines museum galleries can be examined at your own pace (exhibits are labeled) or you may choose to have a docent provide more detailed and personalized interpretation. Tours are given on demand for individuals and families. Snap your photograph next to the memorial for fallen miners located at the foot of the flagpole at the entrance.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/missouri-mines-state-historic-site>

Saline County

Annie and Abel Van Meter State Park

2146 N Highway 122
Miami, Missouri
660-886-7537

Annie and Abel Van Meter State Park features remnants of the Missouri Indian village that sat at the Great Bend of the Missouri River, marked on a map by Jacques Marquette and Louis

Jolliet in 1673. A hand-dug earthwork -- Old Fort -- and several burial mounds lie within the park's boundaries. The state's American Indian history is interpreted in displays and exhibits at the park's Missouri's American Indian Cultural Center. On your way into Annie and Abel Van Meter State Park, stop by Missouri's American Indian Cultural Center for a short orientation of the park. Plan to spend time viewing both permanent and temporary displays that interpret the cultural history of the nine tribes that called Missouri home in the early 19th century. There are personal audio guides available for you to check out at the front desk at no cost. As you walk through the cultural center, these handheld wands provide brief historical accounts of the nine tribes and several American Indian legends. Snap your photograph with one of the exhibits inside the Cultural Center.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/annie-and-abel-van-meter-state-park>

Vernon County

Osage Village State Historic Site

Highway C
Walker, Missouri
417-682-2279

The quiet and peaceful hilltop scenery at Osage Village State Historic Site only hints at the presence of a village that once housed between 2,000 and 3,000 people living in about 200 lodges. The site features a walking trail and outdoor exhibits that help visitors visualize the village, which was inhabited between 1700 and 1775. Visualize the once-thriving American Indian village and the surrounding area as it was on your walk to the ten interpretive stops along the site's interpretive trail. Snap your photograph at interpretive stop #4, Blue Mound.

<https://mostateparks.com/park/osage-village-state-historic-site>